

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01076 061743Z

44

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 VO-03 SCA-01 SSO-00 PER-05 A-01

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O 061723Z JUN 74

FM USINT DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 770

INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

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GENEVA PASS TO MR. ATHERTON

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, APER, CGEN, SY

SUBJECT: CONSULAR WORKLOAD, USINT DAMASCUS

1. POST HAS REACHED A CRITICAL POINT REGARDING CONSULAR FUNCTIONS IN SYRIA. WE ARE AT PRESENT RECEIVING AS MANY AS 40 INQUIRIES AND ARE ISSUING APPROXIMATELY 12 VISAS PER DAY. PRESENT STAFF FINDS IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO HANDLE THE CONSULAR FUNCTIONS ON TOP OF PRIMARY DUTIES AND EXTRA BURDEN PLACED ON THEM BY VIP VISITS, DAMASCUS FAIR INVOLVEMENT, AND GENERAL RAPID EXPANSION OF SYRIAN/US RELATIONS.

2. IN ORDER NOT TO SLIGHT CONSULAR ACTIVITIES POST FINDS THAT IT MUST REQUEST TDY CONSULAR OFFICER FOR AT LEAST 90 DAYS TO RELIEVE PRESENT COMPLEMENT FOR THEIR ASSIGNED DUTIES.

3. POST DOES NOT MAKE THIS REQUEST LIGHTLY. WE REALIZE THAT STAFFING WORLDWIDE IS CRITICAL; HOWEVER, CONSULAR OPERATIONS IN DAMASCUS SHOULD HAVE FAIRLY HIGH PRIORITY. WE ARE SURE WASHINGTON IS AWARE THAT AFTER SEVEN YEARS ALL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND U.S. HAVE BEEN LIFTED. THIS HAS OPENED THE FLOODGATES OF NIV APPLICATIONS BY SYRIANS TO TRAVEL TO THE U.S. ON EITHER LEGITIMATE BUSINESS OR ATTEMPTS TO VISIT RELATIVES THEY HAVE NOT SEEN FOR MANY YEARS.

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4. FYI: IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN EMBOFF AND SYRIAN
FONOFF OFFICIALS THE SUGGESTION HAS BEEN MADE THAT AN
ADVERTISEMENT BE PLACED IN THE LOCAL PAPERS ADVISING SYRIANS
THAT DAMASCUS USINT IS NOW ISSUING NIVS. SYRIAN OFFICIALS
POINT OUT THAT THEY ARE BEING INUNDATED WITH CALLS WANTING TO
KNOW WHETHER OR NOT SYRIANS CAN APPLY IN DAMASCUS FOR NIV.
POST IS RELUCTANT FOR OBVIOUS REASONS NOT TO MAKE THIS FACT
WIDELY KNOWN.

5. PLEASE ADVISE ASAP YOUR COMMENTS/DECISION REGARDING THIS
CRITICAL SITUATION.
SCOTES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DAMASC01076
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740145-0969
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740670/aaaaciel.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <03-Sep-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONSULAR WORKLOAD, USINT DAMASCUS
TAGS: AFSP, APER, CGEN, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005